

**Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Orem Junior High School
765 North 600 West
Orem, Utah 84057**

October 19-20, 2004



Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Orem Junior High School
765 North 600 West
Orem, Utah 84057**

October 19-20, 2004

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, October 19-20, 2004, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Orem Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Steven Stewart is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Orem Junior High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Orem Junior High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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OREM JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

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Dr. Devon C. Tufts..... Assistant Principal
Keith L. Grover..... Assistant Principal

Counseling

Karen Sumner Counselor
Colette Casper Counselor
MarLynn Gardner Counselor

Support Staff

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Kirk Anderson	LaDene Hancock	Howard Shurtleff
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Kathy Carter	Ron King	Jenny Tanner
Mary Conrad	Camille Kingman	Kathe Thornton
MarDene Fernandez	Marisa Lee	Dorcas Tuft
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Cathy Freeman	Diane Lungo	Curtis Winters
Mary Goodwin	Brittney Misiego	Cathy Wood
Sondra Green	Gary Moody	

OREM JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide opportunities for all students to:

- Become life-long learners
- Achieve their potential
- Contribute to Society

BELIEF STATEMENTS

All students can learn and student's learning is our primary focus.

A safe, challenging, and nurturing environment promotes student learning.

Curriculum and instructional practices should incorporate a variety of learning activities to enhance student achievement and self-efficacy.

The community shares the responsibility and benefits of education.

Parents should be actively and anxiously involved in their student's education.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Susan W. Sweet, Roy Junior High School, Weber School District,
Visiting Team Chairperson

Linda Durrant, Payson Middle School, Nebo School District

Christine Hunt, Clayton Middle School, Salt Lake District

Janet K. Jensen, Spanish Fork Junior High School, Nebo School District

Nancy Schleiger, Elk Ridge Middle School, Jordan School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

OREM JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Orem Junior High School provides educational services to approximately 1,038 students in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades in the Alpine School District. The school was built in 1963 and has gone through several renovations over the years. The most recent renovation occurred last year and included the expansion and redesign of the student commons, the addition of a new band room, and a complete new entrance to the school. Internal changes have also occurred during the past several years, including students being assigned to teams of teachers who share a common prep period. Although a loss of resources has necessitated changes to the school's structure of teaming, the staff and administration continue to value the philosophy and search for ways to continue the teaming concept. The school operates on a block schedule—four 80-minute periods each day. The current productivity model reflects some changes from the past and incorporates planning time for teachers at the beginning and the end of the school day.

The organizational structure of the school consists of the principal, two assistant principals, three counselors, 41 teachers, one library/media specialist, five secretaries, two custodians, four para-educators and several support staff personnel. The school is situated in an older area of the district with little new housing and, therefore, has experienced decreasing growth in the student population over the past few years.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

Much of the information in the school profile was written two years ago. A current need to reorganize this school's long-held traditional method of grade-level teaming and productivity is causing teachers to search for new ways to collaborate, accomplish goals, and work together to continue to identify ways to improve student learning. As a result of this need, staff members have developed close and positive interpersonal relationships and a strong desire to collaborate at large.

In reviewing the school profile, staff members noted that throughout the survey results, Hispanic parents and staff members viewed the school more positively than the rest of the stakeholders. The staff recognizes a communication gap between what is happening at the school and what many parents think is happening. School personnel have identified a need to keep parents better informed regarding issues of school improvement.

- b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

More analysis, including a written summary of disaggregated data, would help the staff and other stakeholders determine which student populations should be targeted for academic attention and/or necessary curricular and instructional changes.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- It is suggested that all areas of communication between school and parents/patrons be reviewed to determine how best to articulate the positive things that are happening in the school and help all stakeholders understand the impact of the total school program on students.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff review the mission and belief statements on a regular basis to make adjustments that reflect current thinking and beliefs, incorporate new learning, and bring new staff members on board.
- It is suggested that teachers purposely and specifically consider the school DRSLs, together with core standards and objectives, in developing curriculum and lesson planning.
- A continuous update on test data, together with ongoing training on the effective utilization of information, should provide the staff with opportunities to compare groups of students and levels of proficiency. More informed use of data will benefit teachers in aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The Orem High School administration and staff began their self-study a few years ago, and are to be commended for their efforts. In visiting with staff members, students, and parent groups, it is apparent that all have been highly involved in the accreditation process. The self-study has been a collaborative effort, and all stakeholders are not only aware of the process and the content, but feel they have had many opportunities for input.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The Visiting Team was impressed by the honest evaluation process which was reflected in the Focus Group and Department Analysis Reports. The committees did a thorough job of assessing the status of various school systems and departments in determining strengths and needs. Since some organizational changes have been made at the school in the past year, it was necessary to rely on current information from the staff and administration regarding new issues and developments at the school.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Orem Junior High School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

1. Develop Skills
 - Learn basic skills of reading, writing, math, technology, learning strategies, and social skills.
 - Learn how to find and organize information.
 - Learn how to work in groups.
2. Acquire Knowledge
 - Learn the thought process for problem solving.
 - Have knowledge for informed career decisions.
 - Develop an understanding of the world and other cultures.
3. Responsible Attitudes
 - Learn character values of respect, caring and integrity.
 - Respect authority.
 - Have a tolerance of differences and compassion for others.
 - Have a willingness to contribute and gain from society.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

There is strong evidence that Orem Junior High School has collaborated in developing a shared mission statement, belief statements, and goals. The administration and focus groups began this process by reviewing the existing mission statement, belief statements, and goals, and determined that the needs of the school had changed. They updated the statements and goals to reflect the current needs of the school. The administration and the focus groups then

included the faculty in the process by having them review the updated version of the statements and goals. The faculty had opportunity to give input into the changes and voice opinions concerning the updated statements and goals. The School Community Council was deeply involved with the revision and establishment of the mission statement. The council also voiced concerns and suggestions regarding the belief statements and goals. The faculty and Community Council's input was included in the revisions and publication of the statements and goals. The mission statement, belief statements, and goals underwent four different revisions before the administration, faculty, and Community Council published the current statements and goals.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The school's shared vision addresses the current needs of the school and reflects the intent of the administration and staff to provide every student with a quality educational experience. These beliefs acknowledge the need for a productive environment and a variety of learning experiences for each child. The statements define the importance of parents and teachers working together, as well as a responsibility for community involvement. The long and involved process of developing these belief statements by all stakeholders is evidence in itself of their commitment to support student achievement and success.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The statements and goals of the shared vision incorporate the desired results for student learning. Goal statements have also been developed to support desired student learning by providing quality instruction and organizational effectiveness.

The school's action plan specifies which DRSLs are being addressed in each category of school improvement. There is little evidence, however, that conscious efforts are being made by teachers to incorporate these beliefs into lesson planning and instructional strategies. Teachers and students were aware of the DRSLs, but many were unable to relate content, express their purpose, or describe what educational impact they would have on the school. Each class had posted a mission statement that incorporated the DRSLs, but did not list them specifically or individually. The administration and focus group chairpersons were more aware of the DRSLs and their use in the school than other school personnel.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

Orem Junior High School is dedicated to developing a strong and meaningful curriculum based on Utah State Core Curriculum. Teachers meet together on a regular basis, several times each month. A portion of this time is dedicated to curriculum development and alignment. Educators across the board collaborate on a regular basis to determine common curriculum, how that curriculum aligns with the core, and how to better facilitate instructional strategies with core standards. Individual teachers are able to identify specific Core Curriculum standards in their own content area.

Departments are working together to ensure the curriculum taught in each department is based upon the clearly defined standards of the Utah State Core. Many teaching strategies are developed collaboratively in an effort to align curricula within departments and between individual teachers. Team teachers meet every other day to coordinate curricula, plan projects, or discuss individual student needs.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

Evidence of staff collaboration was included in the school accreditation report and substantiated through interviews with department members. The faculty members at the school strive to align their curricula closely to the State Core and meet at regularly scheduled times for planning. However, there was little evidence that the school's DRSLs are being used specifically as a guide to curriculum development and planning. The mission statement includes the philosophy and ideology of the DRSLs and is displayed and embraced by the staff, but educators at the school do not indicate that they make a conscious effort to utilize the DRSLs in their curriculum planning.

Specific teaching strategies are being used to address the needs of the school. These include reading and technology, which are addressed generally but not specifically in the DRSLs.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

During the visit, the team noted a variety of learning activities in place in individual classrooms. While observing a history class, the Visiting Team saw that students were involved in a continuation of lessons on the presidential election. Students had read, made informed decisions, and then cast their votes. Students were engaged in activities that were relevant. Higher-level thinking

skills were evident. Teachers throughout the building displayed a variety of teaching techniques and learning activities. It was evident that teachers were actively involved with their students. Methods noted in many of the Department Analysis Reports were consistently being used, including different ways of assessing and evaluate students.

Effective classroom management strategies were being utilized to keep students focused and engaged in learning. A positive learning environment was evident throughout the building—classrooms and hallways are neat and clean, student traffic in the halls during classes is at a minimum, and positive messages are posted on teachers' doors and throughout the building.

Teachers interviewed felt that there was more interdepartmental collaboration with teaming, and that collaboration between grade levels could be strengthened. As a school, Orem Junior High continues to discuss alternatives to the traditional teaming that has been used in the past. Teachers and parents who were interviewed were satisfied with the quality of the instruction available at the school. Reading across the curriculum is in place.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

Orem Junior High has a well-trained qualified Special Education Department. Cooperative teaching is in place in a limited capacity between the Special Education Department and general education classes. General education teachers embrace the importance of inclusion. Information on how lessons were modified or adjusted for special needs students is addressed in each department's analysis. Special education teachers indicated that they are able to work with regular education teachers to modify and make accommodations for special needs students. PTSA members gave personal examples of the strategies teachers use to meet special needs.

Teachers interviewed indicated their commitment to the need to employ various instructional strategies and learning activities in each lesson in order to accommodate the learning styles of different students. The design and selection of instructional strategies and learning activities is partially based on the essential knowledge and skills for student learning.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

Students at Orem Junior High School have access to a variety of programs that serve as support systems for student learning. After-school tutoring, homework tracking, peer mediators, and PLATO are just a few examples of opportunities for students who need assistance. Individual departments have implemented tutoring programs that range from after-school help to a special program where teachers

and students meet during lunch. Paraprofessionals and ESL instructors are available to help students in an inclusion environment. A variety of programs are in place for gifted and talented students, and school counselors provide support to students through individual counseling, small group programs, and various classroom presentations. Many school-sponsored clubs and extracurricular activities are also available to students.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- b) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Classroom observation and faculty interviews indicate that teachers are creating a variety of assessments tools based on content and teacher expectations. Many different assessments have been observed.

Expectations for student success are articulated at all levels. Orem Junior High uses the SAT 9 and the State CRTs for school-wide assessment. All students in English and reading classes are also tested three times a year on the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). All teachers have access to the results of these tests, and most have indicated a need and desire to become more proficient in utilizing this data as a basis for determining strengths and weaknesses in curriculum design. Each department collaboratively uses assessment strategies specific to its Core Curriculum and instruction. Department chairs mentor newly assigned teachers in the development of assessment strategies.

Teachers are also provided with data regarding school-wide grade distribution. They are encouraged to use this information to plan added support/remediation for at-risk students.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Staff members use a variety of assessment methods, including projects, oral presentations, and written assignments, in addition to the traditional quizzes and written tests. There are many indications that assessments such as labs, speed development in keyboarding, interviews, and portfolios have been developed to reflect performance standards. Teachers embrace the theory that the use of various assessment practices provides a more comprehensive picture of student performance and skill acquisition. A portion of Professional Development Days is dedicated to helping teachers improve assessment practices.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

Discussions with parents and students support evidence from the Focus Group Report that teachers are generally fair in their assessment and grading practices. Efforts to minimize threats to test validity, including bias and distortion, are made by closely following the State Core and providing individualized instruction. This allows students to more fairly demonstrate competence regardless of individual differences. Teachers are continually striving to eliminate bias in assessment practices. The fact that many different tools are utilized for student assessment is evidence that teachers are seeking the most accurate evaluation of their students.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

Several levels of leadership exist at Orem Junior High School. The administration exhibits great support for promoting quality instruction by providing resources and opportunities for professional development and collaboration, monitoring unnecessary interruptions during the school day, and maintaining an open door policy for staff members who have new ideas or who may be in need of assistance. Department chairs and team leaders also provide leadership by promoting small group discussions, monitoring curriculum alignment, sharing best practices, and reviewing intended gains. Teachers mentor each other by sharing ideas and working cooperatively to meet student needs.

The student government is involved in recognizing student accomplishments with a “Student of the Day” program. They promote student involvement through the organization of various GPA activities, school-sponsored service projects, and social opportunities.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

The administration is extremely supportive of using data to drive decision making at the school. Data is being made available and teachers are being encouraged to use this information as the basis of assessment. The faculty has been trained in the use of the COGNOS system and is beginning to use disaggregated data to evaluate and improve teaching practices. A continued effort needs to be made to help the staff to become systematic in evaluation efforts—to make routine attempts to identify and analyze specific data in assessing outcomes before moving forward in the decision-making process.

The faculty is collaborating within departments and is beginning to collaborate with other departments. This involvement and commitment to collaboration are evident at every level in the school community.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

Student achievement is monitored within the school community in a variety of ways. PowerSchool is used to provide students and parents with current information about individual student progress. There is also a plan to provide information on students' reading levels for parents on PowerSchool. COGNOS provides an abundance of data related to core testing. Teachers have expressed a need for more training in the use of data. The Visiting Team recommends that a portion of the staff development time be allotted to for this purpose.

A part of the school's action plan is to identify at-risk students and provide various remedial procedures and programs. The school leadership also monitors school-wide grade distribution

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

There have been a number of changes to the school to improve the physical plant. An attractive and spacious commons area, including a new entrance to the school, a new band room, and a main office complex, has been recently constructed. The lockers have been painted as the result of SCC recommendations. A lawn has been planted in the front of the school. There is a lot of pride and appreciation expressed for these improvements. The Visiting Team heard many references from all stakeholders about Orem Junior High School having a reputation as a "ghetto" school. Conscious efforts are being made at all leadership levels to overcome this undeserved label through programs that bolster student confidence in maintaining a professional and positive environment throughout the school.

Students are extremely proud of their school's new look, and the student government is encouraging the entire student body to take responsibility for the day-to-day upkeep of their building. The students understand that with pride comes spirit, and they have expressed a willingness to take some responsibility for caring for the facility that, in some ways, designates who they are.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

The school is committed to using the tools and resources available to support its goals. Department projects such as better use of available technology in the CTE Department are being implemented as part of the school's action plans. The Community Council is enthusiastically involved in supporting the use of Trust Lands funds to support the action plan for reading. Grants to improve reading

across the curriculum and to create study skills classes are further examples of resources being used to support school goals.

With decreased enrollment and the loss of several FTEs this year, the need to redistribute resources has been a real concern. The administration is aware of the stress this has caused for the faculty and has been extremely proactive in seeking avenues to utilize available resources in “smarter” ways—ways that will provide the most positive impact on the school community for student success.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The school administration has empowered the Community Council and PTSA to be actively engaged in school life and the decision-making process. These groups have real roles and have had many opportunities to contribute to the overall success of the school. Both groups feel that someone is listening to their ideas and concerns and, in turn, they voice strong support for the school leadership team.

The student government takes a lot of responsibility for activities in the school and is involved everyday in the functioning of the school. The administration was seen as open, responsive, and supportive of all groups.

Two items on the parent survey suggested that some shareholders have less than positive perspectives on some aspects of school life. A moderate percentage of parents indicated that they “didn’t agree” with the statement that teachers regularly communicate with parents, or that they were satisfied with the way students are treated by teachers. More discussion about these perceptions might be warranted.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

There is strong evidence of a positive and productive working relationship among students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. All school stakeholders are effective in developing a powerful learning community. New methods and programs are researched and implemented after thoughtful analysis of needs and data. All parties involved are extremely supportive of each other’s efforts.

The school is dedicated to creating and supporting a learning environment for students that nurtures a sense of caring. Teachers demonstrate a deep concern for

their students and their peers. Students respond by expressing their appreciation for this concern, and find it easy to approach and work with their teachers.

Extensive support is given at all levels—district, school, department, etc.—for collaboration. Teachers meet often for teaming, study group work, and faculty projects. The administration not only supports these efforts, but also plays a big part in implementation. There is a strong sense of community and support within the school.

b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

The school is actively engaged in collaborative networks that support the student learning goals. The PTSA (Parent/Teacher/Student Association) and the SCC (School Community Council) play an active role in making decisions that affect student learning at the school. For example, it was decided at an SCC meeting that the environment of the school was not conducive to good student learning. They made several suggestions, such as painting the lockers a lighter color in order to brighten the halls. The SCC was pleasantly surprised when they came back after the summer to see that this suggestion had been implemented. The SCC, after reviewing achievement data from each year, voiced their concern that reading needed to be addressed in the school and, therefore, were a big part of the decision to allocate Trust Land monies to help implement this part of the school's action plan.

The PTSA has been actively involved in changing the perception of the community and school patrons concerning the demographic profile of the school. They are diligently working to help the community and the stakeholders of the school recognize their positive accomplishments and dedication to high standards and educational goals. The school community is diverse, and efforts are being made to utilize this diversity in creating a positive/productive learning environment.

Collaborative teams have been created to increase a coherent and seamless instructional program for students. Teams are formed to discuss cross-curricular possibilities, as well as grade level curricula and ways to be certain that students perform on the correct level and are ready for the next level of instruction. Teams have also been formed in each department to determine and focus on important instructional programs, standards, and objectives for the students.

There has been an outreach to the feeder elementary schools in the area in order to assist students in their transition to the junior high school environment. Students are invited to come and visit the school prior to their entrance. Elementary students are invited to special programs or productions that are put on by the school. Programs are developed that help students with special needs (i.e., ESL, resource, remediation, etc.). Ninth grade students are given opportunity to visit

the various high schools as they prepare to continue with their education. Counselors, administrators, and teachers work with the high schools to provide a successful transition for all students, especially those who need special services. Alpine District has formed partnerships with the area universities and colleges that help to provide staff development and in-service programs for faculty and staff. These programs provide productive links throughout the academic community and enhance student learning at the school.

The school works to build collaborative networks of support with community members and groups, youth-serving agencies, clergy and government leaders, and leaders in higher education and business.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

The productivity model that provides time after school gives the faculty a vehicle to schedule a variety of meetings to meet with each other in departments, teams, and study committees. They can share best practices, concerns, and reports from outside professional development activities. Faculty members are encouraged to attend a variety of conferences and trainings yearly. Books have been selected for all faculty members to read and discuss.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The school community has demonstrated ongoing involvement in change and improvement. The openness and support of the administration for all stakeholders to be involved in the change process has contributed to that process. The productivity model helps provide the critical factor of time. The faculty commitment to the process and willingness to work together make the improvement possible.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Since Orem Junior High School is not applying for accreditation through the NAAS, these standards do not apply. Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through the NAAS, but only by the USOE—it is their choice to join the NAAS or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The school-wide action plan addresses the needs for improvement identified by the school community through the Focus Groups and Department Analyses Reports. Each area of the plan identifies specific DRSLS that will be addressed. The action plan is comprehensive in addressing those areas that have been identified as critical.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

The school community, including parents, staff members, and students, is committed to the success of the students at Orem Junior High School. All stakeholders show a strong dedication to moving forward in an effort to implement plans to improve student learning, organizational systems, and the school's image throughout the community.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?*

There are good general guidelines and some specific measures defined in the action plan. More specificity in measurement may be necessary to monitor and evaluate accomplishments. More articulation is needed on the way data will be collected and used to assess the outcome of certain parts of the action plan. It is unclear what the final indicator for success will be.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The staff members are commended for their total involvement in developing the school's self-study, and for a willingness to honestly address needs and to realistically and thoughtfully plan for change. The school profile indicates that staff members are not only well acquainted with the community they serve, but are also committed to working together to address problems and challenges through a school-wide action plan. New teachers expressed appreciation for opportunities for immediate involvement on school-wide committees, and for the mentoring and support of other staff members.

- The administration is to be commended for its strong support of staff, students, and community groups. The administrators' availability, accessibility, and sensitivity to the needs of those they serve creates a positive environment of teamwork and trust.
- Due to declining enrollment and changes in resources, the staff this year has been challenged to reorganize a long-held tradition of teaming by grade. In spite of the need to change an organizational structure that has been in place for several years, the staff has maintained a positive attitude and worked to build even stronger relationships across the curriculum. With the help and encouragement of the administration, teachers have worked willingly and diligently to develop new avenues for collaboration and alternative ways to accomplish their goals.
- The staff is to be commended for establishing a professional learning environment by participating in a productivity model that provides the faculty with the time to collaborate on policy issues, instructional, and curricular goals, and ways to enhance a positive spirit of school membership. There is evidence that each member of the staff is involved in specific study groups addressing school issues, assigned professional reading, and a cross-curricular reading program.

Recommendations:

- All stakeholders should have an ongoing awareness of the school's DRSLs and a working knowledge of their relationship to the curriculum and the school improvement plan. Teacher awareness should be evident from the opportunities presented to students to develop these skills and attitudes through daily instructional activities across the curriculum.
- The Visiting Team recommends that school staff members closely examine student achievement data and data collected by leadership teams for inclusion in the school's action plans. The action plan should be aligned with the data and evidence provided in the school profile, the departmental information, and focus group reports, as well as the DRSLs.
- More analysis and a written summary of the disaggregated data provided in the school profile would help stakeholders more efficiently determine what steps or plans are needed to positively affect student achievement and implement change.
- A specific plan should be developed to gather pertinent data to measure and evaluate the results of each of the goals identified in the school's action plan.